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SKETCH OF THE LIFE
OF
JAN AUGUST MIERTSCHING,
INTERPRETER OF THE ESQUIMAUX LANGUAGE
TO
THE ARCTIC EXPEDITION
ON BOARD H.M.S. "INVESTIGATOR," CAPTAIN M'CLURE,
1850, 1851, 1852, 1853.
ILLUSTRATED WITH A PORTRAIT.

BY
DANIEL BENHAM.

LONDON:
WILLIAM MALLALIEU AND CO.
MORAVIAN MISSION HOUSE, 97 HATTON GARDEN.
1854.



JAN AUGUST MIERSCHLING,
Interpreter of the Esquimaux Language to
the Arctic Expedition
commanded by Sir John Franklin
LITH. BY M. CLARKE, COMPTON & CO.

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As a thankful tribute to commemorate the goodness, and wonderful direction, and providence of God, in conducting and preserving, amidst countless hardships, privations, and dangers, Captain M'Clure and his associates, throughout their voyage in search of the lamented Sir John Franklin and his companions, during the years 1850, 1851, 1852, and 1853 ; by which voyage, prosecuted by BRITISH OFFICERS and BRITISH SAILORS, under the benignant auspices of HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, the problem of an arctic oceanic connection between the Great Pacific and the Atlantic was affirmatively solved,—this Portrait, of Jan August Miertsching, Interpreter to the Expedition, and the sketch that accompanies it, are dedicated to the service of the Mission of the United Brethren on the Coast of Labrador.

The Portrait is engraved from a photograph by Philip Henry De la Motte, F.S.A., 168, New Bond Street, and a daguerreotype by Fehrenbach, of the Strand.

The sources of information from which the sketch is drawn, are :—

1. Facts and incidents communicated by Br. Miertsching himself.
2. Periodical Accounts relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren.
3. Papers presented to Parliament in 1854, by command of Her Majesty, relative to the recent Arctic Expedition in search of Sir John Franklin and the crews of H.M. ships “Erebus” and “Terror,” &c. &c.

SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF

JAN AUGUST MIERTSCHING.

JAN AUGUST MIERTSCHING, whose portrait is prefixed to this sketch, was born on the 21st day of August 1817, at Groeditz, a village in Upper Lusatia, about two miles from Budissin (Bautzen).

His parents were Jan Miertsching, a Servian Vend, and Erdmuth, daughter of Frederick Naacké, a German. His father died when he was two years old, and his mother married a second husband, Joseph Baresch, a Bohemian, from Semtesch near Czaslaw, in the district of Chrudim. Humble in circumstances, his step-father, following the trade of a shoemaker, had very little means of providing him with schooling; but he taught him the Bohemian language, and at the age of fifteen sent him to Kleinwelké, a settlement of the United Brethren in the neighbourhood of Bautzen, originally established for the religious and moral instruction of those Vends, who, though living in the midst of their German oppressors, are a distinct nation, with a language of their own, which is a dialect of the Slavonic, and of which they are very tenacious.

At this settlement, and while following the trade of his step-father, the Lord touched the heart of Miertsching, and he became united in church-fellowship with the Brethren. Possessing an ardent desire to acquire knowledge, both human and divine, the leisure which he here enjoyed was eagerly embraced, and he soon attained considerable proficiency.

He continued at Kleinwelké about twelve years, during the whole of which period he devoted himself to the service of the Lord, and spent a year's probation, in 1835-6, at Herrnhut the principal settlement of the Brethren. When called to the service of the mission at Labrador he joyfully obeyed the call. It was enough for Miertsching to recognize the voice of Him who inspired his will, and he made His call his choice. On the 3rd of June, in the year 1844, he, and two other single brethren, arrived in London, on their way to that ice-bound and inhospitable coast; where for more

than a century the Brethren have maintained mission settlements for the benefit of the benighted Esquimaux, and to light—

. “Beneath the shadow of the pole,
The tenfold darkness of the human soul.
To man—a task more hopeless than to bless
With Indian fruits that Arctic wilderness ;
With God—as possible when unbegun
As though the destin’d miracle were done.”

They sailed in the brig “Harmony” from the river Thames on the 11th of June, and had a favourable voyage across the Atlantic, but the vessel was becalmed off the coast, and in imminent danger of being driven by a violent swell from the eastward upon the frightful precipices of the promontory of Kiglapeit (Cape Mugford). By the mercy of the Lord the vessel and all on board were delivered from this peril, and the breeze which He caused to spring up from the shore, gently bore them in safety to Okak, where they landed on the 10th day of August. Here Br. Miertsching took up his abode ; and, led by the hands of his Brethren who had preceded him in the heavenly mission, he was favoured during the winter months to assist in the day-school, which he found to be a useful employment, and the means of advancing his own knowledge of the Esquimaux language. The fondness of the natives of these regions for music is well known, and Miertsching was encouraged in his work among his thirty-eight little ones, of whom the choir consisted of ten singers and eight players, by evidences of advancement in the right direction. In 1845, he united with his fellow-labourers in reporting on the generally favourable progress of the Esquimaux under the teaching of the Holy Ghost ;—a source of unspeakable comfort to their own hearts. The schools were a great pleasure to him ; they were attended then by about one hundred and thirty children, were always opened by praise and prayer, and fifteen of the scholars had learned to write with great proficiency.

The year 1846 was a season of famine in this always sterile land, but towards its close both land and sea so yielded their increase, that a feeling of heart-felt thankfulness was excited. The dreaded absence of this timely supply would have been deplorable indeed. In the month of April Br. Miertsching was appointed to accompany Br. Hertzberg, a fellow missionary, on a visit to one of the brethren at Hebron, who had been seized with serious illness. This he did on a sledge drawn by twenty dogs. As by such excursions, and by uniting with the Esquimaux in their adventurous occupations, Br. Miertsching no doubt was preparing for a far more dangerous enterprise in a much higher latitude of the regions of ice, it may not be uninteresting to give a narrative of this journey in his own words :—

“In March last we received intelligence from Hebron that Br. Glitsch was

seriously ill, and wished for the medical aid of Br. Hertzberg. As Br. H. could not be permitted to travel alone, on account of his own delicate state of health, I was appointed to accompany him. On the 3rd of April, we set out on a sledge drawn by twenty dogs,* the driver of which undertook to convey us in one day to the end of our journey. He had provisions given him for his dogs, which, however, we afterwards learnt, their master had found it convenient to devour himself, leaving the poor animals without any food. We ourselves were provided with only one day's stock of eatables, and even this small quantity was nearly spoiled by the frost. We started at five o'clock in the morning, and by noon had performed the half of our journey. We now halted, lighted a fire, and warmed our coffee, which had already become a lump of brown ice. Thus far we had proceeded upon the ice, close to the shore, but we were now compelled by its extreme ruggedness to pursue our way overland, and that by a route altogether unknown; the worst dogs of our team were unspanned, and left to their fate; having eaten nothing for two days, they were quite unable to proceed. Our driver ran before us to discover a track over the steep, often precipitous hills, and the many cavities on the earth's surface; leaving me to drive and to keep up with him as well as I could: the heavy whip with its lash, eighteen feet in length, was put into my hand, but, for some time, I struck myself instead of the dogs as often as I attempted to use it. Practice, however, at length made perfect, and I became as dexterous as any Esquimaux. Poor Br. Hertzberg sat meanwhile upon the sledge, well clothed in fur from head to foot, and still further defended from the cold by a leathern case. Yet the cold was so intense, (45 degrees of Fahrenheit below the freezing point), that his moans never ceased till we reached Hebron. I was, indeed, often very uneasy about him; and doubted whether he

* An Esquimaux sledge is drawn by a species of dog not unlike a wolf in shape. Like the wolf, these dogs never bark, but howl disagreeably. They are kept in greater or smaller packs or teams proportionate to the means of the master. They quietly submit to be harnessed for their work, and are treated with little mercy by the heathen Esquimaux, who make them fag hard for the little food they allow them. This consists chiefly of offal, old skins, entrails, such parts of whale flesh as are not fit for other use, rotten whale fins, &c., and if there is none of this kind of food, they are left to themselves to seek dead fish or mussels on the sea-shore. When pinched with hunger they will swallow almost anything, and on a journey it is necessary to secure the harness within the snow-house over night, lest by devouring it, they should render it impossible to proceed in the morning. When travellers arrive at their sleeping quarters, the dogs are unharnessed, and left to burrow in the snow where they choose, and in the morning are sure to come to the call of the driver, who then gives them some food. Their strength and speed even with a hungry stomach is astonishing. In fastening them to the sledge, care is taken not to let them go abreast. They are tied by separate thongs, of unequal lengths, to a horizontal bar on the fore part of the sledge. An old knowing one leads the way, running ten or twenty paces a-head, directed by the driver's whip, which is often twenty-four feet long, and can be well managed only by an Esquimaux. The other dogs follow like a flock of sheep. If one of them receives a lash, he generally bites his neighbour, and the bite goes round.—*Periodical Accounts of the Missions of the United Brethren*, vol. iii. p. 226, 227.

would reach that place alive. Our guide we soon lost sight of. I did my best to follow his track, driving over stock and stone. For great part of the way I was obliged to run by the side of the sledge, and, where the track was narrow and precipitous, to keep it from falling down the declivity. Some of the precipices were, indeed, so frightful, that had not the Lord given His angels charge concerning us, we must have been subjected to some serious, if not fatal accident. Thus we proceeded over one steep eminence after the other, when, all at once, the sledge, the dogs, and myself were driven backwards along the slippery snow; nor did we reach the summit of the hill we were ascending, till this accident had happened to us three times. Eighteen such eminences we had to surmount with our emaciated dogs. Intense as was the cold, I was in a profuse perspiration, owing to the constant exertion I had to make. When the night overtook us, it became scarcely possible to discover the track of our forerunner, or to see the dangers which beset our way. We nevertheless proceeded, and by nine o'clock we overtook our guide. Hunger and thirst tormented us; we had still ten biscuits, and two bottles of beer, but the beer being changed into ice, we were obliged to moisten our biscuits with snow; we then proceeded, our guide assuring us that Hebron must be on the other side of the hill. So far was this from being the case, that we had ten more hills to cross, before we reached the neighbourhood of that settlement. Shortly after midnight, we came upon a sledge-track, and pursued our way with some degree of confidence. At length, after more adventures than I could easily describe, we were permitted to reach the end of our toilsome and hazardous journey, truly thankful for the help and preservation we had experienced. Having spent three pleasant days with our brethren and sisters at Hebron, we returned to Okak in another sledge, performing the journey with ease in twelve hours." *

On another occasion, Br. Miertsching made the journey alone, and accomplished the distance, between sixty and seventy miles, with twenty-six dogs, in about eight hours.

Br. Miertsching and his fellow servants could this year say with heartfelt thankfulness to the Lord, that among the members of this congregation were many faithful souls, whose conduct did honour to the Christian profession.

In August, 1847, the mission family at Okak reported with gratitude of heart, that the past year had been in almost every respect a season of prosperity to themselves and their flock. Their Heavenly Father sent them provision in such abundance, that want was banished from their dwellings—and of the operation of the Spirit of God in the hearts of their people, they had encouraging evidences. The one hundred and thirty children who attended their school examination, showed that the pains bestowed upon them had not been fruitless, and their improvement in reading and writing was considerable.

* Periodical Accounts, vol. xviii. p. 81, 82.

Having now made some proficiency in the Esquimaux language, an unrestrained intercourse with the young people under his care became very agreeable to him. He relates, however, "It is not till a matter has been long discussed that we can get into anything like clearness with our pupils; the fault of which must be in part laid to my own door, as I am not yet fully competent to carry on a discussion in the Esquimaux language." So difficult is its acquisition.

At the same time, the brethren at Okak were enabled to record the gratifying fact of the meetings of the congregation, now reaching to four hundred persons, being more crowded than ever they had been before.

The report from Okak of August, 1848, conveys the pleasing intelligence, that the children and youth under care of the brethren continued to give much satisfaction, by regular attendance at school and diligence and progress in learning. By far the majority read very fairly, and possessed a satisfactory acquaintance with the narratives and doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures; and had become exceedingly desirous to obtain copies of the Hymn-book in their language. In the knowledge of arithmetic and geography they were still very backward, but their advancement in spelling was truly pleasing.

The difficulties to be overcome in the education of so rude a people as the Esquimaux, led the labourers to a humbling sense of their own insufficiency and weakness, and to consider themselves rather as hindrances than as instruments in the Lord's hand, toward the gathering in of the reward for the travail of His soul. To Him, their blessed Saviour, they looked for that patience and resignation, so much required for the continuance of their arduous exertions among this benighted nation; who like themselves were the purchase of His own most precious blood. It will readily be conceived that it was no small pleasure to the missionaries when they found a diligent Bible student among a people whose general indolence and mental torpor is to an European almost inconceivable.

Br. Miertsching's winter evenings (winter being the only period of the year that can be devoted to learning), were mostly spent in conversation with his young men, usually on some passage of Scripture, and occasionally on subjects of general history, of which he endeavoured to give them some idea. He observes, "their questions and remarks were certainly very curious, but at the same time they elicited the best proof of their attention having been awakened." He also speaks of a small fine-toned organ, which had in the previous year been sent from Europe, as a source of no small gratification to his Esquimaux, who were inexpressibly delighted on hearing it played by him for the first time.

In April, the one hundred and forty-seven pupils underwent a public examination, when it was found that seventy-eight of them could read with tolerable correctness and fluency. Of those in the lowest class, five years and under,

several had made a hopeful beginning, and were consequently promoted to the second class, from which again others advanced to the first. Their writing books gave evidence in most cases of satisfactory progress, and some of the orthographical exercises were almost faultless. Their recitation of various portions of Scripture, and no doubt of hymns too, was equally satisfactory.

In the year 1849, Br. Miertsching, having occasion to visit Germany, left Okak for that purpose in the "Harmony" on the 13th of September, and reached London on the 23rd of the following month, in company with Br. and Sr. Hertzberg, who had faithfully served the cause of Christ in Labrador many years, and were now retiring to close their declining days of service in their native land. The voyage was somewhat tedious and boisterous, but it was rendered memorable by having on board nine sailors, the survivors of the barque Graham, Captain Froud, which had been lost in the ice near to the entrance of Hudson's Bay. They had landed at Okak in most wretched circumstances, after twenty-four days of unparalleled distress. The poor sufferers, who had not the remotest idea of a mission on this coast, and were apprehensive of being murdered by its inhabitants, did not venture to accept the invitation of two christian Esquimaux, who had cautiously approached them in their kayaks;* but when at length, all hope of other relief being extinguished, the few that were able to walk ventured on shore, and heard the melodious voices of the women, chanting a hymn of praise to God for their deliverance from impending death; when they afterwards saw some of them occupied in washing their clothes, and others preparing a meal of fish and seal's flesh to revive and refresh them, their hardy spirits were quite overpowered, and they burst into tears. Here was a powerful evidence of the great change wrought in the

* The kayak or fishing boat of the Esquimaux is six yards in length, pointed at the head and stern, and shaped like a weaver's shuttle; it is at the same time scarcely a foot and a half broad over the middle, and not more than a foot deep. It is built of a slender skeleton of wood, consisting of a keel and long sidelaths with cross ribs like hoops, but not quite round. The whole is covered with seal's skin. In the middle of this covering there is a round aperture, supported with a strong rim of wood or bone. The Esquimaux slips into the cavity with his feet, and sits down upon a board covered with soft skin; he then tucks his water-pelt, or great coat, so tight about him (the rim of the opening forming a girdle round his loins), that no water can penetrate into his little skiff. His lance, harpoon, and fishing tackle are all arranged in due order before him. His *pautik* or oar (made of red deal and strengthened with bone inlaid) he uses with admirable dexterity. This, except when he is using his weapons, he grasps with both hands in the middle, striking the water on either side alternately, by which means he can propel himself at the rate of twenty or even twenty-four leagues a day. In his kayak the Esquimaux fears no storm so long as he can keep his oar, which enables him to sit upright among the roughest breakers, or if capsized, while the head is downward under water, with one stroke he can recover himself; but if he lose his oar in a high sea, he loses all.—*Montgomery's Greenland*, edit. 1819, p. 145. Caique, contracted to Caic, French, a skiff belonging to a galley. The Turkish merchant vessels navigating the Black Sea are called Caiks.

character and conduct of the Esquimaux by our Lord, through his feeble servants employed in the mission of Labrador, who can also bear many other testimonies to the happy effects of the gospel of the blessed God, on the lives and conduct of the people, in the work of whose conversion and civilization they have felt it to be their heart's delight to serve.

Shortly after the return of Sir James C. Ross, from his unsuccessful voyage in the Polar Regions, in search of the lamented Sir John Franklin and his adventurous companions, the British Government determined to re-commission the ships "Enterprise" and "Investigator," which Sir James had commanded, for a renewal of the search. The Board of Admiralty, at the suggestion of those distinguished Arctic explorers, Sir Edward Parry and Sir John Richardson, were hereupon induced to apply to the Mission Board of the Brethren for the co-operation of a Labrador or Greenland missionary in this humane and beneficent enterprise; it being held to be of great importance that a means of ready and satisfactory communication with the Esquimaux who might be fallen in with on the western or northern shores of the Polar seas should, if possible, be secured. Though aware of the serious inconvenience and loss to which either of the northern missions would be subjected by the indefinite absence of one of its more experienced servants, the Elders' Conference of the Unity, following the mind and will of their gracious Lord, cheerfully and cordially acquiesced in the application, under the belief that in yielding assistance towards the carrying out of an object so noble and benevolent, the servants of the church would be acting in the spirit of Him who came not to destroy but to save the lives of men. They were animated also with the hope that an opportunity might thus be afforded in the good providence of God, of scattering the precious seed of the Gospel among hitherto unvisited tribes of the Esquimaux race; and by the persuasion that it was a duty owing to the British Government thus to manifest a grateful appreciation of the favour with which the missions of the Brethren among the heathen, especially the one on the coast of Labrador, had ever been regarded by it, and of the protection and assistance which it had constantly received at its hands. The result was, that Br. Miertsching, then in Germany with his friends, was appointed by the Board of Admiralty to the office of Esquimaux Interpreter to the proposed expedition, a commission which he accepted in dependence on the gracious help of the Lord.

Br. Miertsching, after a somewhat tedious and trying journey across the north of Germany—the railway trains being not unfrequently stopped by the snow which covered the land—reached London on the 16th of January, 1850, whence, after a halt of thirty-six hours, in the course of which he was liberally supplied with everything necessary for his outfit, he proceeded to Plymouth, arriving just in time to join the expedition. It was originally intended that he should be received on board the

January,
1850.

“Enterprize,” commanded by Captain Collinson, C.B., but there being no vacancy for him in the ship, he was obliged to take a berth in the “Investigator,” under the command of Captain Robert M’Clure. The expedition sailed from Plymouth Sound on the 20th of January, 1850; its intended course being through the Strait of Magellan to Valparaiso, thence to the Sandwich Islands, and finally to Behring’s Strait and the Polar Sea.

... “There to steer their dangerous way,
To regions in the twilight verge of day,
Through barriers of eternal ice.
Generous and hopeful on the voyage they move,
And fearless tempt this venturous deed of love.”

On board the “Investigator,” Br. Miertsching experienced every kindness and attention, both from the officers at whose table he dined, and the rest of the ship’s company. The crew altogether consisted of sixty-eight persons, including ten officers, with whom he was classed, and two surgeons. His cabin being very confined, he was kindly permitted to spend great part of his time during the outward voyage in that of the Captain, where he employed himself in reading and writing or in learning English, of which previously he had but a slight knowledge. In point of outward comfort he had never fared so well before, and probably never would again; one thing only was wanting—the fellowship of his brethren.

Three days after leaving port, they encountered a storm, which at night carried away the ship’s topmasts and one of the yards, while he lay asleep happily unconscious of what was going on upon deck. On the 11th day of sailing they lost sight of their consort, and did not rejoin her until they reached the Strait of Magellan. Contrary winds prevented them from making Madeira, and from the report of a fearful epidemic raging at Rio Janeiro, they did not venture to touch there. Br. Miertsching suffered much from the heat between the tropics, which, however, was not so great as he expected.

April, 1850. At length, on the 12th of April, they reached Cape Virginia and entered the Strait of Magellan; but, as it was nearly dark, and the tide rose forty feet, they cast anchor. Next morning, under favourable wind and tide, they continued their course close in shore. Struck with the scenery, Br. Miertsching exclaims, “What a beautiful country, compared with Labrador! It is an extended champaign diversified only by gentle slopes. During the day we saw more than six thousand llamas grazing. This animal is about as large as a middling sized cow, brown and white in colour, with a long neck and small head.” In the afternoon they came up to the steam vessel, which was waiting to tow them through the strait. Here they saw a large number of the natives on horseback, besides women and children, who all seemed to be well proportioned, and of large stature;

of a tawny complexion, and wearing long garments of llama skins. Br. Miertsching expressed delight at the appearance of the children. But “oh to think of so fair a land with so many people, *and all heathen, without a missionary.*”

When the “Enterprize” and “Investigator” met in the Strait of Magellan, it was the intention of Captain Collinson to take Br. Miertsching into his own ship, having provided accommodation for him; but as he was very happy and comfortable, he begged hard to remain where he was until they should arrive at the Sandwich Islands;—to which request the Captain acceded, Captain M’Clure and his officers having spoken of him in the highest terms, and being as sorry to lose him as he was loth to leave them.

At Port Famine, which is a penal settlement belonging to Chili, they bought two oxen, two pigs, and a dog. There was a Spanish priest at this place, whose outward aspect had very little to remind them of a pastor in the service of Christ.

At Port Gallant, in whose bay contrary wind and fog obliged them to anchor, they found the “Enterprize” and six American vessels. It had been intended to take in fresh provisions at Valparaiso, but they now received instructions to sail direct for the Sandwich Islands. Br. Miertsching had seen from the ship in her progress four large settlements of the Patagonian Indians, and availing himself of a short delay, caused by a strong head wind, he went on shore, where he found the grass more than two feet high, with box-trees in abundance, and an uncommon variety of flowers. Hills a thousand feet high skirted with impenetrable forests; and multitudes of birds, rabbits, deer, and llamas, gave life to the landscape. Not far from a spring he found an Indian wigwam.* He also saw two canoes made of the bark of the birch tree, and some small articles left by the natives—but the inhabitants had disappeared.

Leaving Port Gallant on the 18th of April, they reached Honolulu, in Oahu, Sandwich Islands, on the 1st of July, after a rather boisterous and unpleasant voyage, having finally parted from the “Enterprize” on the 21st of April. They had to struggle long against a violent north-west wind. It was a trying period, the waves broke incessantly over the deck, several of the sailors fell sick, and this state of things continued with little intermission, until the end of May.

In Br. Miertsching’s cabin the water stood two inches high; every night he had to sleep in a wet bed, so that at last he became unwell, and was not entirely recovered when the ship arrived at Honolulu. The weather was calm during the first three days of June, but afterwards the wind sprung up and was most favourable. This part of the voyage presented but little of interest, nothing having been observed except large shoals of flying fishes. On the 20th they saw land; it was the great

* An Indian cabin or hut, so called in America. It is sometimes written *Weekwam*.—WEBSTER.

volcano of Mouna Roa, sixteen thousand feet high, on the island of Owhyhee. They then passed three islands before entering the port of Honolulu. At Honolulu they learned that the "Enterprize" had left on the previous day for Behring's Strait.

As the Captain purposed remaining here a fortnight, Br. Miertsching was advised by the doctor to take up his quarters in the town, which he considered necessary for the complete recovery of his health. Adopting this advice, he inquired for the American Missionaries resident there: by them he was kindly received, and provided with lodgings. In reference to his stay at this place, he could not express himself too highly or gratefully of the generous hospitality shewn him by the Mission family. The friendly intercourse he enjoyed with the Missionaries, Clark and Rice, and the sailors' chaplain, the Rev. S. Damon, as well as with several Christian families in the town, was very encouraging to him. His spirit was truly refreshed by a parting service, at which all the families belonging to the Mission united, and thus he was enabled with renovated health and courage, to resume his berth on board the ship when she proceeded on her voyage. Br. Miertsching was unable to judge as to the spiritual life of the large congregations of Christian natives in the Sandwich Islands, with which however the Missionaries appeared to be satisfied; but he found that their more favoured flocks were in no respect further advanced in civilization than the Esquimaux on the inhospitable shores of Labrador.

On the 4th of July, the anniversary of the day on which the Americans declared their independence, the "Investigator" left the harbour of Honolulu, and Br. Miertsching having received from London a vocabulary of the language spoken by the Western Esquimaux, commenced a systematic investigation of it, hoping soon to become acquainted with its peculiarities, as he found it to be a dialect of the one spoken by the Esquimaux in Labrador, the primitive words being the same in both. He had already made it his daily practice to devote a portion of his time to the study of the English and Esquimaux languages, especially the latter, cherishing the hope that, should it be the will of the Lord, he might yet return to the service of the Mission in Labrador.

Among the incidents of the voyage, Br. Miertsching was favoured to observe a work of grace in the heart of his friendly attendant, who at first appeared to him to be nothing but a merry thoughtless person. On getting a little better acquainted with the English language, he had many conversations with him, and gave him several religious books to read. Not long after this he observed that he had altered his manner of life, and had become more quiet and retired, and on the arrival of the ship at Honolulu, he, with the rest of the crew, obtained leave to go on shore, when he immediately proceeded to the Rev. Mr. Damon, the sailors' chaplain, in order to buy of him some religious books and tracts. In the course of the subsequent voyage, Br. Miertsching not unfrequently noticed several sailors

reading these very attentively, instead of joining in the worldly amusements, in which they formerly took pleasure.

The "Investigator," instead of following the track of all former navigators, that is to say, running to the westward first, stood directly north; her progress from Honolulu having, under a most favourable wind, been between the Aleutian islands, Amlia and Tschunam, on the 20th of July.

On the 24th she sailed by Gore's Island; and on the 29th, having passed Lawrence's and King's Islands and Cape Prince of Wales, she was in Kotzebue Sound. She made the ice on the 2nd of August, and exchanged numbers with the ship "Plover," on the 5th, under a press of canvass. To a signal of recall her Captain is said to have replied, "Important duty,"—"Own responsibility."

29th July,
1850.

2nd Aug.
1850.

Encountering the ice until the 7th, when the wind failed, the boats having been manned, towing commenced to clear it amidst songs and cheers, and their laborious work was soon brought to a successful termination in perfectly clear water, in Smith's Bay, from whence under a light breeze they worked to the eastward; and on the 8th, being off Point Drew, Mr. Court (second master) was sent on shore, with Br. Miertsching, to erect a cairn and deposit a notice of the ship having passed. Upon landing they were met by three natives, who at first were very timid, but upon exchanging signs of friendship, which consisted in raising the arms three times over the head, to an angle of forty-five degrees, they approached the boat, and after the ceremony of rubbing noses, which is their most approved mode of salutation, they became very communicative. By the assistance of Br. Miertsching, who was declared by Captain M'Clure to be an "invaluable interpreter," and the selection of whom to this important office did infinite credit to the discernment of those who sent him, it was found that the tribe, consisting of ten tents (this being the only approach to their numbers he could obtain,) had arrived only three days before, and that they held communication with a party inland who trade with the Russian Fur Company. The previous evening, they had observed the ship, but could not imagine what large trees they were (the masts) moving about, and all the tribe assembled on the beach to look at them, when they agreed that it was something very extraordinary, and left the three men, who met the boat, to watch.

8th Aug.
1850.

These men gave the pleasing intelligence that open water would be found along the coast from about three to five miles distance during the summer; they also stated that the heavy ice very seldom came in, or never left the land to a greater distance than at present. They did not appear to know of any islands further north, as they found it impossible to go in their kayaks, when in pursuit of seals, beyond one day's journey to the main ice; and then the lanes of water allowed of their proceeding three-quarters of a day further, which brought them to very large and high ice, with not space enough in any part of it to allow their kayaks

to enter. Br. Miertsching, from his knowledge of the Esquimaux habits, estimated the probable distance to be about forty miles off shore, which was thought by Captain M'Clure to be perfectly correct. They moreover mentioned seeing boats with white men going eastward last year, but had not seen any other white persons or anything like this vessel before; they had, therefore, no name of sufficient grandeur to give the great "Omiac,"* as they called her, meaning the "Fast moving Island." Several of them came off to the vessel but had little to barter, as "all their hunters were away; but immediately we had been observed, they were sent for, and would soon arrive; then," said they, "you will be gone, and how disappointed they will be!" These appeared a simple kind people; very poor, very filthy, and looked exceedingly wretched. The period when the ship would return was repeatedly inquired for; as by that time they would have a quantity of skins—they were anxious for us to wait a little while, that they might send off a supply of reindeer, but the boat returning, and the wind being fair, the ship made sail to the eastward. Captain M'Clure continues—"We had a great number of visitors, many of whom had been their whole lives between the oppermine and Point Barrow; these could give no information of the missing expedition. I am certain that had any of Sir John Franklin's people reached these shores, we must have heard of it. The coast is inhabited throughout, and the natives are, to all appearance, a kind and merry race, and when we gave them the presents through the medium of the interpreter, we told them that we were looking for our lost brothers, and if they saw any white men in distress, they were to be very kind, to which they assented by saying they would, and give them plenty of deers' flesh."

While running along the land, which is exceedingly low, two conical mounds were observed upon Point Pitt; these were found to be old Esquimaux câchés, in which they deposit their venison.

9th August, 1850. With much anxiety, great labour, and imminent risk the vessel rounded Cape Halkett, about forty miles from the entrance to the river Colville, on the 9th of August, when the ice set in close to the shore. On the 11th, off Jones' Island, where a notice was deposited, about thirty natives came alongside in two baidars,† from

* Or Umiac, the name given by the Esquimaux of Greenland to the large women's boat, which is managed chiefly by women, and used in summer to transport the whole family with their tents and baggage from place to place. It is generally from twenty-four to thirty feet long, four or five wide, and two or three deep. It is flat bottomed, but sharp at both ends, and consists of a wooden skeleton knit together by thongs or straps, and covered with the strongest seal skin. It is not liable to upset, and lives in the roughest sea.—*Moravians in Greenland*, p. 41.

† Called Omiac by the natives. See previous note. Baidar is the name given by the natives of the Kurilly islands, and of the north-western coast of America. See Rees' Cycl. art. *Baidars*, where a minute description is given of it, somewhat different from that quoted above.

which some fish and ducks were obtained in exchange for a little tobacco. They had been about two months on the coast and traded with the Russian Fur Company. Their surprise of course was very great, particularly at the size of our handkerchiefs (the sails). The whale boats on board attracted their attention, and they asked if trees grew in our country sufficiently large to make them. The head man possessed a gun with the words "Barnett, 1840,"* upon the lock; this he obtained of the Russians. As a fair specimen of the observation of these people and their aptitude for trade, the following remarks of Captain M'Clure may be taken. "Seeing that we cut the tobacco into pieces to give in exchange for their fish (salmon trout) they began to do the same with the fish; this, however, we would not admit, so they were obliged to come to our terms." "During the afternoon of the same day, while standing along a low flat island, observed a flag (a pair of seal skin trowsers) upon a lofty pole, and many natives around it; we stood for them, but when the boats were pulling in they appeared to regret their temerity, for down came the signal, and away they ran. Shortly gaining courage they returned, and as we approached, arranged themselves in line upon the beach, and commenced extending their arms above the head, which being answered from the boats, perfectly assured them of our amicable intentions. Upon landing they evinced the most manly confidence, rubbing noses, and embracing most vigorously. These were very cleanly, so that the operation was not so unpleasant as it otherwise might have been." Through Br. Miertsching it was learned that these people had never before seen an European, neither had they the smallest article of European manufacture about them. They live during the summer months upon these desolate islands, and in the winter retire a short distance on the main land to their warmer residences. Their women and tents were upon another island.

They are a fine active set of young men, averaging about five feet six inches in height; they barter skins, &c. with a tribe further west, who in their turn do the same with others, until they reach the Russian post upon the river Colville, to which post a despatch was forwarded for England under a faithful promise that it should be delivered. A few presents were then made to them, together with a boat's ensign, in commemoration of the first man-of-war whose flag had ever floated in these sterile regions. They could not comprehend, for some time, the magnificence of the gifts, and were loth to touch them, but at length Br. Miertsching made them understand that they were sent them by a great chief, and in return they were to be very kind to all white men they met, and shew them to them. To all this they agreed; and the chief man seizing the presents in his arms, ran across the island to his canoe, followed by the remainder of his tribe, and no doubt hurried with the joyful tidings to the women.

* A gun-maker in the east of London.

12th Aug.
1850.

On the morning of the 12th four baidars came alongside, containing the whole of last night's tribe and some who had been seen two days before, from which it appeared that they were migratory. They brought with them a supply of fish and venison, but the latter was putrid. Most of the men were allowed to come on board, and although (aware of their thievish propensities) a sharp look-out was kept upon them, they most adroitly managed to slip into one of their baidars both handles of a winch and a small ice anchor, of which the women became the receivers. The theft was by mere accident discovered by the end of one handle protruding from beneath the ample proportions of one of the ladies, who, when taxed, immediately returned the articles and informed upon her husband. For this immorality the whole boat was interdicted from receiving any present.

14th Aug.
1850.

Working to the eastward with a current setting in-shore, the ship had to contend with loose ice in rapid motion, the larger floes of which created an eddy that frequently turned her right round against helm and sails. Besides this, she had to drive through heavy ice in the midst of fogs, which necessitated a constant look-out to avoid shoals, yet despite of such vigilance she was hemmed in, pitched ashore, and obliged to be lightened, in which calamity eleven casks of salt-meat were irrecoverably lost by the upsetting of one of the whale boats. At length by means of warping and kedging among heavy streams, and large masses of ice striking the vessel with thundering force, and after having been driven back many miles, she reached

24th Aug.
1850.

Port Warren on the 24th of August, where natives were observed, by whom it was expected a despatch home might be forwarded. From the contiguity of this tribe to the Mackenzie river, Captain M'Clure was led to imagine they traded with the Hudson's Bay Company; he was therefore greatly surprised upon approaching the shore to find, instead of being greeted with the usual friendly signs, that two savages with gesticulations the most menacing, and armed with bended bows, and arrows on their strings presented themselves, one of whom most significantly brandishing a large knife, waved the boat off. Taking no heed of these hostile demonstrations, the boat was pulled in, and they retreated, yelling furiously. "Upon our reaching the beach," relates Captain M'Clure, "we made the same signs of friendship which we had used with the Esquimaux farther west, but without any effect until joined by the interpreter, who appeared in his full native costume. This gave confidence, and upon explaining our friendly intentions they approached, but when within about thirty yards, observing some muskets in the hands of the boat's crew, their fury revived. To pacify them the muskets were laid upon the ground, where they became the object of a cautious examination. Still unsatisfied, they beckoned to take them to the boat. Seeing that nothing short of this would allow of any communication, the muskets were sent away; they then approached, and permitted us to examine their bows and arrows."

By the conversation which ensued, it was elicited that the ship having been observed early in the morning, the whole tribe immediately took to their baidars with their most valuable skins, and left the settlement; the chief and his son only remaining, as it would have been undignified in *them* to retire from the defence of their property when danger was apprehended. A sick son and his mother seeing our friendly disposition, soon joined us; the poor lad's foot was examined by the Dr. (Armstrong) and found to be frightfully mortified. The chief stated that they were at war with the neighbouring tribes, and had occasional skirmishes with the Indians; that they had no intercourse with any person belonging to the Great River (Mackenzie), nor had they seen any white people before. It appeared, however, that when the sea freezes, towards the latter end of September, the whole tribe proceeds west, and trades with the Esquimaux who had been met with near Jones's Island. The interpreter told the chief that he had found a brother in the chief of one of those tribes, whose name was Uttauwas. The old chief clapped his hands, and said he knew him well, that he was the great chief with whom he traded, and the reason for going to such a distance in preference to the Mackenzie was that the white men had given the Indians very bad water, which killed many and made others foolish (drunk), and that they would not have any such water. From this it evidently appeared that the Hudson's Bay Company lose annually many valuable skins, which find their way to the river Colville, instead of the Mackenzie.

Noticing an old brass button suspended from the ear of the chief, he said it was taken from a white man that had been killed by one of his tribe, who went away in his kayak when the vessel was seen. The white man belonged to a party which had landed at Point Warren, and there built a house. Nobody knew how they came, as they had no boat, but that they went inland. The man killed had strayed from the party, and he and his son buried him upon a hill at a little distance off. The only answer that could be obtained as to the probable time when this took place, was that "it might be last year, or when I was a child." The spot was examined, but there was no indication to be found of the missing expedition. Br. Miertsching, from his knowledge of the customs of the Esquimaux, was of opinion that the story of the white man was traditionary. Probably some of the early discoverers had been engaged in an affray with the ancestors of the present chief, and one of them had been killed. The present generation inherit the honour, and so identifying themselves with their forefathers, speak of the affair in the first person as if they themselves were the actors, which is very likely, from the vague definition of the time, "It might be last year, or when I was a child."

Under date the 30th of August, Captain M'Clure relates, "I proceeded in the first whale boat, accompanied by Dr. Armstrong and Mr. Miertsching, followed by Lieut. Cresswell and a party of officers in a cutter, bringing a variety of presents.

30th Aug.
1850.

We were met upon landing by two females, who greeted us very cordially, and through the medium of the interpreter, acquainted me that the remainder of the tribe was at Cape Bathurst catching whales, which was at no great distance, and they would be our guides. Gladly availing ourselves of this incident, the boats were directed to pull along the shore, while we, ascending the cliffs, reached a fine level plain extending several miles north and south, rich with verdure, and abounding in moss and excellent pasturage for rein-deer." After walking until towards night, the party returned to the ship without finding the tribe at Cape Bathurst—hence it appears that time and distance are alike disregarded by the Esquimaux.

Next morning, however, determined to find the whale fishers, Captain M'Clure and his party, after coasting in his cutter about ten miles, discovered upon the extremity of Cape Bathurst a large encampment, consisting of thirty tents and nine winter houses, numbering a little over three hundred people. Upon landing on a very low isthmus, which connects within a few yards the islands and the main land, a commotion at the village was observed, and a number of men rushed down the cliffs, launched their kayaks, and crossed to meet them. Hauling these light and elegant skiffs on the beach, they advanced with knives drawn and bows bent, evidently prepared for hostilities. The Esquimaux finding by the gestures of the party that their intentions were amicable, returned their bows to their seal-skin cases, but the knives were still retained. The interpreter told them that the visit was a friendly one, and that they should put away their knives. "Yes," said they, "when you do your guns."

To be allowed to carry the musket appeared a great favour, for which in return they presented their knife as a token of friendship. Br. Miertsching conversed with the chief, a fine intelligent middle-aged man, for about an hour, upon the necessity of his forwarding despatches to the Mackenzie, which he promised most faithfully to perform. For this he was to receive a musket and ammunition, and on delivering the packet a further reward, equal in value to a silver fox-skin. Br. Miertsching from his knowledge of the Esquimaux character, was of opinion that although the despatch would have to pass through three tribes of heathen before it came to the abodes of civilized man, it would safely reach its destination by the hands of the chief himself, whose tribe did not, as was expected, trade with the Mackenzie, but with another tribe further south, who in their turn trafficked with Indians in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. The perfect ease with which Br. Miertsching understood and conversed with these interesting people, surprised them very much, and they were most anxious that he should remain among them; the chief, as an inducement, presenting his daughter, a very pretty girl of about fifteen years of age, who should be his wife, to which were to be added tents, with all their appurtenances.

Meanwhile, upwards of a hundred persons descending from the village, it was deemed prudent not to excite their cupidity by opening the presents. Re-

turning therefore to the boat with the chief, he was instructed in the use of his gun, with which he soon became conversant, and on receiving the ammunition, he expressed himself much gratified at the gift, and walked towards the village with his chief men. A line was then drawn on the beach, which the recipients of gifts were not to pass,* and this being perfectly understood, Br. Miertsching commenced the distribution. For a short time order was maintained, but the fair sex becoming clamorous and closing round, the line was broken, and to prevent being driven into the water, Captain M'Clure and his party were compelled to retreat to their boat, which was lying aground about twenty yards from the beach. By this manœuvre they escaped from all who had not water-tight boots; but still about forty of the Esquimaux surrounded the cutter, and so eager and persevering were the women, that several were lifted on board, in spite of the efforts of the crew to prevent it, and endeavoured to seize everything within reach. One of the women in the most dexterous manner slipped the compass out of its box into the breast of her jacket, and it was recovered with difficulty.

By great firmness and the stoppage of supplies, the natives were reduced to the necessity of keeping order, or were compelled to quit the boat. The presents being at length distributed, and all restored to good humour, Captain M'Clure and his party bade them farewell, and by the vigorous assistance of the Esquimaux, launched the boat. They were escorted to the ship by seventeen men in their fairy kayaks, who all reached her about a quarter of an hour in advance of the cutter, excepting one, which getting some little distance off shore, encountered a fresh breeze and a rough sea. The cutter shortened sail, and took him in, boat and all. The poor fellow being drenched, was offered a little brandy, which he drank at a gulp, not being aware of its strength; he suffered the sensation to subside without evincing any vexation, except by his eyes watering, and then asked for water. Many of the natives came on board the ship, but only one ventured below; he was exceedingly surprised to find that we had not tents but houses (cabins), and he said he should have many wonderful things to tell when he went home. This tribe is a fine intelligent race, cleanly, handsome, and well grown, and it is deeply to be regretted that so little has hitherto been attempted in the promotion of their civilization; but it requires a higher motive than that of trade to seek tribes inhabiting this bleak frontier of the icy north, and by the aid of intelligent and energetic missionaries, to endeavour to lead them from their present hopeless state to the blessings of Christianity.

In the forenoon of the 1st of September the vessel appearing off Cape Bathurst,

* If a line be drawn on the ground round a party of Europeans engaged on shore or on the ice in making observations, or otherwise not wishing to be disturbed, the natives will understand it is a barrier they are not to pass, and generally speaking will respect it.—*Captain Washington.*

many natives in their kayaks went on board without the slightest reluctance, and through the interpreter informed Captain M'Clure that during the night they had been preparing a feast, roasting whale and venison, and had salmon and blubber and other delicacies, besides plenty of skins, and they hoped he would come on shore to enjoy them; this, however, the precarious position of the vessel prevented, and as it was understood by those on shore, a large number of both sexes joined the ship, and being clamorous to get on board, were taken upon deck, kayaks and all. Making themselves quite at home, they examined every article of furniture in the vessel most minutely; the pictures and looking-glasses in the cabins of the officers were objects of much admiration. Many danced with the seamen, and so mutually happy were all parties, that had they not been told that the ship was going towards the ice, and would not come near their tents again, it was questionable whether compulsory means would not have been necessary to get them away. It was ascertained from them that the main ice pack is permanent, never separating from the shore more than twelve or fourteen miles. They designate this ice, "the land of the White Bear," as it abounds with that animal, which they appear to dread. Their fears induced them to entreat that they might not be landed on the pack, especially as many of their women were with them. One mother mentioned that her little child was carried away by one of these animals, a short time previous, while at play on the shore a little distance from her; and the poor creature shed tears in relating the catastrophe. At parting several presents were bestowed upon them, which elicited promises of friendship towards the white men—those who might hereafter visit their coast, as well as these now with them. The natives had no article of European manufacture except a few iron pots, for each of which they gave the no less formidable price than five of the best silver fox skins.* This tribe leave the Cape about the 20th of September, when the ice is sufficiently strong to bear their sledges, for the purpose of bartering with the neighbouring tribe. They then go to their winter houses, some distance in land, excepting a few families, who reside the entire year upon this bleak and ruthless shore.

1st Sept.
1850.

The water between the shore and the pack was now practicable, although encumbered with much loose ice, and the ship on the 1st of September finally left the Esquimaux on the American coast, and proceeded on her increasingly perilous voyage. On the 5th a large volume of smoke was seen to rise on shore, and as the ice-mate had positively reported from the crow's nest at the mast-head that he could distinguish several persons in white, moving about, and had observed

* The fox skins here spoken of are black, and, as well as those of sable, are greatly superior to the fox skins of England, being uncommonly fine, and selling at prices varying from £20 to £40 per skin, at the sales of the Hudson's Bay Company.

white tents in a hollow of the cliff, Captain M'Clure expected to find there a party of Europeans in distress. He, therefore, despatched Lieutenant Cresswell with Dr. Armstrong and Br. Miertsching in the first whale boat, to ascertain the fact. On their return they reported that the smoke arose from fifteen small mounds of volcanic appearance, occupying a space of about fifty yards; the atmosphere of the place being strongly impregnated with sulphur. The lower mounds were about thirty feet above the level of the sea, the highest about fifty feet; the land in the vicinity was blue clay, much intersected with ravines and deep water-courses, varying in elevation from three hundred to five hundred feet. Thus the mystery of the white shirts and tents was at once explained, and the faint hope of discovering a part of the missing expedition was again disappointed.

On the morning of the 6th high land was observed, distant about fifty miles. On approaching it the main pack appeared to be resting upon its western shore, which it was, if possible, intended to coast. As, however, the eastern side was comparatively clear of ice as far as could be ascertained from the mast-head, Captain M'Clure gave the preference to this course, supposing it to be an island round which a passage would be found into the Polar Sea. On the 7th they were off the South Cape, a fine bold headland, whose cliffs rose perpendicularly more than a thousand feet. This promontory was named "Lord Nelson's Head," in memory of the illustrious hero, whose early career was connected with arctic adventure.* Shortly afterwards Captain M'Clure landed, and taking possession in the name of her Majesty, our most gracious Queen, called the land "Baring's Island," in honour of the First Lord of the Admiralty. Here were observed numerous traces of rein-deer, hares, and wild fowl: moss, and divers species of flowers, with other things of interest to the naturalist, were also found in great abundance. Latitude $71^{\circ} 6'$ north, longitude 123° west. From an elevation of about five hundred feet a fine view was obtained towards the interior, which was well clothed with moss, giving a verdant appearance to the range of hills that rose gradually to an elevation of between two and three thousand feet, and was intersected with ravines, which must convey a copious supply of water to a large lake situated in the centre of a wide plain, distant from the point of vision about fifteen miles. The sight seaward was extremely favourable; open water with very little ice full forty miles towards the east insured good progress in that direction.

Promptly availing himself of this advantage, Captain M'Clure proceeded with his ship until the 9th, when land was observed about fifteen miles ahead, extending to the northward as far as the eye could reach. The mountains in the interior were lofty and snow-covered, while the low ground was quite bare.

* Nelson, when a boy, was with Captain Lutwidge in the "Carcass," under Captain Phipps of the "Racehorse," who made the first official voyage to discover the north-west passage in 1773.

6th Sept.
1850.

7th Sept.
1850.

9th Sept.
1800.

11th Sept.
1850.

Several very remarkable peaks were discernible, apparently of volcanic origin. This discovery was named "Prince Albert's Land," in honour of Her Majesty's Consort; lat. $72^{\circ} 1' N.$ long. $119^{\circ} 25' W.$ Continuing their course to the north-east, on the morning of the 10th they neared two rocky islets, which they named after Her Royal Highness the "Princess Royal." The wind becoming favourable all sail was set in the hope of reaching Barrow's Strait. Their advance was of short duration, for the wind suddenly changed, and in two hours the water became so thickly studded with ice floes, that with great difficulty the ship was kept free until the 11th, when she was beset, and next day her course was impeded by a very dense pack. Moving onward through narrow lanes of water and often stopped by the closing in of the ice, they proceeded until the 15th, when the ice in the N.E. no longer restrained by the fresh S.W. wind, which had been blowing for some time, spread itself abroad with such rapidity that its approach could be seen marked as with a clearly defined white line, like an unbroken wave along the dark smooth water. To turn out the ship's crew, and make sail was but the work of a few minutes, yet with such violence was the ice impelled that there was scarcely time to get clear of the piece to which the ship had been secured, before it encircled and swept her away, first towards the shore then into deep water, keeping all on board in dread uncertainty as to what would be her fate. This continued until near midnight, when its progress was mysteriously arrested, and gradually opening out, the ice allowed of their running the ship into clear water. The unmistakeable marks of the season for navigation drawing to a close were now apparent, and it became a subject of anxious deliberation what course to adopt with regard to the safety of the vessel; whether to run *the chance* of obtaining a harbour, which, if it failed, would place her in a worse situation than at present—or to advance as long as the season permitted, and hazard a winter in the pack. Captain M'Clure decided on the latter alternative, being, in addition to other weighty reasons, unwilling to relinquish the ground secured with so much difficulty, labour and anxiety, for only a remote chance of finding safe winter-quarters, but especially as the ship was now in the vicinity of Banks' Land, the very direction in which Sir John Franklin would in all probability have endeavoured to penetrate.

17th Sept.
1850.

On the morning of the 17th the wind gradually died away, and the vessel was almost immediately beset. One floe, full six miles in length, in passing crushed all before it, and must have cut the ship asunder had not the ice in the opposite direction yielded to the pressure. The ship was now secured by two stream cables, (one of iron) two six-inch and two five-inch hawsers to a moderate sized piece of ice, of a depth of eight fathoms below the surface, and from this she never afterwards parted. Drifting with it the ship was conveyed to lat. $73^{\circ} 7'$, its furthest north-east position, and then back round Princess Royal Islands, passing the largest floe within

five hundred yards, and returning along the coast of Prince Albert's Land to where she was finally frozen in on the 30th of September, in lat. $72^{\circ} 50'$, long. $117^{\circ} 55'$.

During this compulsory circumnavigation the ship, especially on the 25th when the danger she encountered of being crushed was most imminent, received many severe nips and was frequently driven close to the shore, from which the deep iceberg happily kept her off. The exposed position of the ship rendered every precaution necessary, and preparations were made for a twelve months' subsistence on the ice or on shore, should any emergency arise to make it imperative to quit her. These perplexities were however terminated on the 8th of October by a nip that lifted the vessel a foot, while a large tongue of ice getting beneath heeled her on one side. She was righted by blasting the hummocks around her, and the pack being speedily compressed with a temperature 7° below zero, the crew completed housing the vessel over and making other arrangements for their winter-quarters.

25th Sept.
1850.

8th Oct.
1850.

This done, and the weather being calm and the ice quiet, on the 10th Captain M'Clure, accompanied by Lieutenant Cresswell, Dr. Armstrong and Br. Miertsching, with a party of seamen, landed over the ice, and took possession of Prince Albert's Land in the name of her Majesty. Walking to the highest eminence observable at a distance of five miles, they found the country to be hilly, intersected with deep ravines and large lakes, and this was the general character of the land on both shores. On their return, they were mortified to find the land and sea ice separated about a hundred yards along the whole line of coast, and being thus cut off from the ship, it was not until half-past two on the following morning they were able to reach her, which was done with great difficulty by means of Halkett's boats,* without which the whole party must have been exposed to the severity of a polar night. The annexation, however, of "Prince Albert's Land" to the British crown, was considered to have terminated so favourably, that an extra supper and allowance of grog was directed to be issued to the energetic crew as a reward for their eight hours' vigorous exertions.

10th Oct.
1850.

Being dissatisfied with the view obtained from Prince Albert's Land as to a connexion between the waters wherein they now were and Barrow's Strait, the settlement of which point would solve the problem of a North-west Passage, Captain M'Clure, as soon as he could safely quit the vessel, determined to proceed in the direction of that Strait. This was done in nine days by means of sledging, having at 3.45 P.M. of the 26th of October, 1850, had the extreme satisfaction of pitching his tent upon the shores of Barrow's Strait, nearly on the line represented on the charts where Sir Edward Parry had correctly marked the loom of the land. Thus he decided a question which was started more than three centuries ago, and the solution of which had engaged the attention and called forth the heroism of some of the ablest and

26th Oct.
1850, N. W.
Passage discovered.

* Captain M'Clure speaks in high terms of the excellency of these valuable little boats, whose whole fitting is but twenty-five pounds in weight.

bravest of men. But no traces of the missing expedition had yet been discovered. During the absence of Captain M'Clure, a party joined by Br. Miertsching, while sporting upon "Prince Albert's Land," encountered a herd of so-called musk oxen,* two bulls, a cow, a heifer and a calf, and most adroitly shot the whole, which yielded a timely and unexpected supply of excellent and nutritious meat, and was regarded as a very favourable termination of the season's operations. This consisted in seizing the advantages that an invisible power had scattered along their road, through fields of ice, where all human exertion would have been equally unavailing with the feebleness of a child to advance them a single yard—

"Through untold dangers, toils and death
God safely clear'd their way."

The dreary period of winter, which had been contemplated with much apprehension, passed mildly away with very little snow or wind, and the health of the ship's company was graciously preserved unimpaired.

18th April,
1851.

All arrangements being made for the searching parties, and the weather favourable for travelling, they were started on the 18th of April, 1851, in three divisions, one to the south-east, one to the north-west, and the third to the north-east shores.

The first division, commanded by Lieutenant Haswell, returned on the 29th of May, having been absent forty-two days, and traced the coast to lat. $70^{\circ} 38'$, long. 115° , and having met with a party of eighteen natives, encamped in the ice in quest of seals.

The second party, directed by Lieutenant Cresswell, reached lat. $74^{\circ} 16'$, long. $117^{\circ} 40'$, and returned on the 20th of May, two of the men being severely frost-bitten, but they were exchanged for others, and the Lieutenant started again on the 22nd. He came back on the 10th of June, having searched Baring's Island to lat. $71^{\circ} 10'$, long. $123^{\circ} 4'$. This was found to be the most fertile part of the polar regions. Both shores were covered with wild fowl of every description; musk oxen, deer, hares, ptarmigan,† and golden plover abounded, and evidently this was their breeding-place. Though now uninhabited by man, it had apparently once been thickly peopled by Esquimaux, the moss-covered ruins of whose dwellings were to be seen in all directions.

The third party, under Mr. Wynniatt, (mate), returned on the 6th of May, their leader having broken his chronometer. They were sent off again on the same day, and returned on the 7th of June, having been fifty days absent, and made lat. $73^{\circ} 21'$, long. $112^{\circ} 30'$.

* A species of the genus *Bos*, which inhabits the country about Hudson's Bay. It has large horns united at the skull, but turned downward on each side of the head. The hair of this animal is very long and fine. The natives call it *mungmak*.

† A bird of the grouse kind, generally weighing about a pound, and seldom more.—*Cartwright*.

Thus a close examination over a vast extent, embracing more than eight hundred miles of coast, was made. The explorers engaged in this arduous service were eagerly and constantly on the watch—

“Where’er some distant speck a sail implies,
With all the thrilling gaze of enterprise:”—

but without the slightest trace of Sir John Franklin, who certainly could not have penetrated the polar sea in this direction without leaving some traces of his course.

Captain M’Clure, resolving to proceed to the party of Esquimaux seen by Lieut. Haswell, took with him his “invaluable interpreter,” and on the 3rd of June they met them. They conversed freely with Br. Miertsching, and gave all the information they knew about the coast, which they did by tracing it upon a large sheet of paper brought for the purpose from the ship to their tents, containing a sketch made by Br. Miertsching, which they at once comprehended. They only traded with the Esquimaux of the south-east, and had not the slightest article of European manufacture about them. The use and sight of iron was perfectly new, all their implements were of copper, their spears and arrows being barbed with it. The copper ore is remarkably fine, but an opportunity of inquiring whence it was procured was unfortunately lost. It probably comes from the south-east tribes, in their bartering transactions, inasmuch as the few and simple ornaments they possessed were of that metal, and obtained from thence. These are a kind, simple, and purely fishing tribe, devoid of the knavish propensities so characteristic of those upon the Mackenzie and Colville rivers, where intercourse with civilised man has demoralized the savage.

3rd June,
1851.

“Lucre-love true love for man forsakes,
Engenders all imaginable ill,
Turns hearts of flesh to flint, and makes
The untam’d man more savage still.”

Upon displaying the presents brought for them the utmost propriety was observed; and, although doubtless all were anxious to participate in those treasures, there was not that eagerness to seize, which rendered the intercourse with the other Esquimaux so troublesome. So far was it from these to do so, that it was with difficulty they could be persuaded to accept the presents without returning an equivalent. A piece of scarlet cloth which Captain M’Clure had tied round a girl’s neck, remained there until they were leaving, when she ran up to Br. Miertsching to ask what she was to give in exchange, and when assured it was a gift from the chief, she gracefully acknowledged it with a smile. No weapons were observed upon them, except such as are used in the chase. They live near their present locality all the year, not going further northward; neither do they believe

that there are any Esquimaux in that direction ; but to the south-east, along Victoria and Wollaston Land, opposite which latter is the American main, pointed out by them under the name "Nunavak Saraluk," the coast is thickly populated. It appears very extraordinary that they do not even possess traditionary legends of their ancestors having been north, where the numerous traces met with on both sides of the Strait, as well as upon the large Princess Royal Island, show that the whole of this coast must at some period have been densely peopled. Br. Miertsching found their language to be identical with that spoken on the coast of Labrador. This he thoroughly understood and conversed fluently with them, though with the Esquimaux of the river Colville and Cape Bathurst, he had some difficulty ; it was, therefore, thought highly probable that the forefathers of these have crossed from Hudson's Strait, and keeping along the coast line of Victoria and Wollaston Land, have thus retained the purity of their language, which those upon the north coast of the American continent have, to a certain extent, lost by constant intercourse with the Indians.

13th June,
1851.

On the 13th of June, every one being on board, and the ship in all respects rendered as efficient for service as on the day she left Plymouth, with a trifling sick list arising out of frost-nips and foot-soreness from travelling, Captain M'Clure and his men now awaited with no small anxiety the disruption of the mighty masses of ice by which they were surrounded, and the consequences dependent upon that event, which could not be contemplated without deep apprehension.

The description of the breaking up of the ice is terrific.

"Beneath, the threatening ground-swells rise,
And, undulating, wave the sea of ice ;
Then burst its barriers, that disrupted roar
In deafening thunders echoed from the shore ;
Battery on battery !—on every side
Yawn the deep gulfs, the plain in chasms divide ;
Gathers the storm and rises now the wind,
The icy masses dash'd disrupted grind,
In horrid crash on every side are seen
The bellowing waves that foam and dash between."

On one occasion the corner of the floe to which the ship was attached, and which had floated from its winter bed, coming in contact with some of the masses, gave way, casting pieces of twelve and fourteen feet square completely out of the water. It grazed the hard bottom with a sound not unlike distant thunder, as it crashed, crumbled, and upheaved, throwing an enormous mound up in its centre as if under the influence of volcanic agency, and then rent asunder ; the part to which the ship was secured remaining firmly grounded, while the other and lighter portion being forced onward with accelerated speed, came directly toward her unprotected stern.

In a minute the warps and anchors were let go, and had this not been done, and had the position of the vessel been less favourable, nothing could have saved her from immediate destruction. After being tossed and tumbled about by the ice in all directions, and after sailing, warping, and drifting with incessant labour, watchfulness, and care, until the 16th of August, the passage into Barrow's Strait was found to be impracticable, although the ship was within twenty-five miles of it, and had advanced in that direction to lat. $73^{\circ} 13'$, long. $115^{\circ} 32'$.

16th Aug.
1851.

Under such circumstances Captain M'Clure bore away in the hope of reaching the Strait by the western side of Baring's Island, being assured that at Banks's Land there was a passage into the Polar Sea. As they passed the Princess Royal Islands with a fine breeze, not a particle of ice was to be seen in any direction, which only a month before had presented enormous floes and heavy grounded masses that had been considered to have been there for years. Even the huge pieces that had been thrown upon the shore had vanished, so that every vestige of that formidable frozen element, in whose trammels the vessel had been held nearly eleven months, had disappeared.

But this was of short duration, for as the ship progressed in the direction intended, she was again constantly beset by floes of ice, one of which lifted her bodily up six feet, and would have proved fatal had it not been rent asunder by its concussion with the piece to which she was anchored. Another having caught the piece to which she was attached, raised it thirty feet in perpendicular height, presenting a frightful aspect to all on board, and had it been thrown over it must have crushed the ship beneath its weight; it however was rent by the concussion, and giving several fearful rolls, was hurried onward with the drifting mass. By another the vessel was heeled over fifteen degrees, and lifted bodily up eighteen inches, with a grind that shook every mast, and caused the beams and decks to groan as she trembled beneath the violence of the shock.

Thus labouring with unceasing toil, amidst difficulties that must be witnessed to be understood, the voyage was prosecuted with heroic courage and perseverance until the 24th of September, when, at daylight, observing Barrow's Strait full of ice, Captain M'Clure determined to take up his winter-quarters in a bay which subsequently proved a most safe and excellent harbour, and which, in grateful remembrance of the many perils they had escaped, he named the "Bay of Mercy," in latitude $74^{\circ} 6'$ north, longitude $117^{\circ} 45'$ west, thus finally terminating this short season's operations, in which the ship had actually been under weigh only five days.

24th Sept.
1851.

Here the ship was frozen in on the same night, and has never moved since. -

"The cruel ice came floating on,
And closed beneath the lee;
'Twas ice around, behind, before—
And now there is no sea.

The night is neither bright nor short,
 The singing breeze is cold;
 But ice is not so strong as hope,
 Each seaman's heart is bold."

No traces whatever had been met with, nor any information obtained from the natives, which could by any possibility lead to the supposition that Sir John Franklin's expedition, or any of his crews had ever reached the shores visited or searched by Captain M'Clure and his men; nor had they seen anything of the "Enterprize" since parting company in the Strait of Magellan, on the 20th of April, 1850.

In the month of September shooting and other parties made daily excursions on land, and in their rambles they met with an exceedingly old Esquimaux encampment, and made a most interesting discovery of a range of hills composed of one entire mass of wood in every stage of transmutation, from a petrification to a log fit for firewood. Many large trees were amongst it, but in endeavouring to exhume them, they were found too much decayed for removal; the largest piece they were able to bring away being three feet ten inches in girth, and seven in length. These were found at an elevation of about three hundred feet above the beach, which, as well as the water courses and ravines, was strewn with chips and small bits of the wood, evidently washed down during the thaws from these ligneous hills.

The highest latitude reached in the course of the voyage was 75° north, which is about ten degrees north of the parts now inhabited by man; yet everywhere remains of former habitations of Esquimaux were seen, indicating that a change of climate had led to a change of dwelling. It is also remarkable that the *aurora borealis* was often seen, not of a brilliant appearance as in Labrador, but of a very pale colour, and in the higher latitudes beyond the magnetic pole it was *lumen australe*, being invariably observed in the south-west, south, and south-east, never northward.

The so-called "ice-blink" was never seen during the voyage, nor is it ever observable at Labrador, but only in Greenland where there are glaciers.

1st October,
1851.

On the 1st of October the vessel was housed in, and the crew were placed upon two-thirds allowance of all sorts of provisions; but before the setting in of the winter shooting parties were successfully employed in procuring a considerable supply of deer, hares, and ptarmigan, all in fine condition, the former having from two to three inches of fat.

1st April,
1852.

This winter, although much more boisterous, was less cold than the last, so that the crew were enabled, except in the month of January, to ramble over the hills in quest of game, which afforded all hands a fresh meal of venison three times a fortnight; and besides being kept in health and excellent spirits during another tedious winter, they had upwards of a thousand pounds weight of venison at the yard arms on the 1st of April, 1852. This sport is sometimes attended with considerable

danger, as was illustrated on one occasion, when a sergeant of marines, while in pursuit of a wounded deer, unexpectedly met a couple of musk bulls. He succeeded in killing both; but his soldier-like coolness and intrepidity were severely tested. Having expended all his shot, he fired his worm, as one of the wounded and enraged monsters rushed towards him; but though only at a few yards distance, it was without much effect, and the animal continued to advance. The infuriated beast had approached within six feet, and was putting his head to the ground to make a final rush upon him, when the sergeant, as his last resource, fired his ramrod, which dropped his prey dead at his feet, and saved himself from inevitable destruction.

The Esquimaux, probably from want of seals, without which luscious food they cannot exist, have deserted Baring's Island, notwithstanding that it abounds with game, and is comparatively fertile.

In April, Captain M'Clure and a sledge party proceeded to Winter Harbour, April, 1852. where they found an inscription cut in the sandstone by Captains Parry and Lyddon in 1819-20; they returned on the 9th of May, having deposited a testimony of their visit. In the next month the take of venison afforded an increased supply of fresh meat; but in July, the crew having been severely tasked in cleansing the ship's hold, and in ballasting and watering preparatory to her expected removal, exhibited symptoms of debility, there being no less than sixteen cases of decidedly scorbutic tendency on board. The progress of the malady was, however, happily counteracted in great measure by the use of sorrel, of which a great quantity was found on the island. 9th May, 1852. July, 1852.

The winter of this year set in very early indeed; the whole past season might be considered one long sunless day, since from the end of May to the close of August that luminary had scarcely been visible at all, and now the bay was entirely frozen over with young ice, two and a half inches thick. The sea ice that had separated from the shore for a short time, and had given promise of release for the ship now closed again and never afterwards moved. Parry's Sound continued all the summer blocked with masses of ice entirely across it. The flowers, which for a short time cheered this frost-bound land all withered, the hardy herbage was unable to withstand the rigorous climate beyond the 15th of August, and the winter closing in, totally annihilated every hope of a release this year. May—Aug. 1852. 15th Aug. 1852.

“ The winter went, the summer went,
The winter came around;
But the hard green ice was strong as death,
And the voice of hope sank to a breath;
Yet caught at every sound !”

The vessel, however, had sustained no damage, being as sound as on the day

she entered the ice ; and as a favourable season would be sufficient to run her through Barrow's Strait, and admit of her safely reaching England, Captain M'Clure announced, on the 8th of September, the plan by which he proposed to carry out the grand object he had in view. This was to achieve the long sought and almost hopeless discovery of the North-west Passage, between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, which during so many centuries had baffled maritime Europe, and which discovery the gallant leaders of the expedition believed would amply compensate for the sacrifices made and the hardships endured in accomplishing it. This plan was well received by the officers and crew, and the ship was housed again in her present bed of immoveable ice, with every indication of a most severe winter.

26th Oct.
1852.
*N.W. Pas-
sage.*

The 26th of this month was the second anniversary of the discovery of the fact that a North-west Passage really does exist, and the occasion being celebrated as it had been last year, by "splicing the main brace" as the sailors call it, or the dealing out of an additional allowance of provisions and an extra glass of grog, it had the effect of invigorating the courage of all, so that the evening was spent with hilarity.

It was ascertained that the rein-deer on this coast do not migrate to the south as had before been generally supposed, but they bear the extreme rigour of the climate, and exist upon the scanty herbage, chiefly the dwarf willow, from off which they break the snow with their feet, the tapping of which can be heard at a considerable distance in calm weather, and often led to their discovery. This was a providential source of great comfort to the crew, and as the hares and ptarmigan also, descended from the high ground to the sea ridges, the supply of game was such as to allow of two issues weekly, and of the usual Christmas festival passing off with great cheerfulness. The crew, determining to render it memorable, exerted themselves with complete success ; each mess-party gaily illuminated and decorated its berth with original paintings, produced by the genius of the lower deck artists, exhibiting the ship in her perilous positions during their transit in the polar sea, &c. But the grand features of the day consisted in enormously large plum-puddings, venison, hares roast and stewed, ptarmigan and sea pies ; dainties which perhaps had never before graced a ship's lower deck so profusely. Any stranger witnessing this scene could faintly indeed imagine he beheld in that cheerful company, happy in the enjoyment of robust health, a crew which had passed more than two years in these dreary regions, and three entirely upon their own resources. Such a mirthful assemblage under any circumstances could not but be gratifying to a British officer—but in the lonesomeness of his situation Captain M'Clure felt it deeply. While impressed with the spectacle as presented before him, he could not be unmindful of the multitude and magnitude of the kind and beneficent providences, which had been extended towards himself and his faithful men by the goodness and mercy of God. To Him alone

were due the heartfelt praise and thanksgivings of all for the great blessings they had hitherto witnessed, in positions of almost inconceivable dreariness, darkness, and desolation. Br. Miertsching, while participating in the social good cheer, could sing—

“ Christ, our Light, our Leading-star,
Who hast kindly us directed
And protected,
When Thy mercies, daily new,
We review,
In the dust we fall before Thee,
Lost in wonder, and adore Thee;
None can give Thee praises due.”

On the 3rd of March, 1853, after enduring an extremely hard winter, the thermometer being in one week as low in average as 62° below zero, Captain M'Clure found, on inquiry, that the ship's provisions could not last until November, and he resolved, according to the plan referred to above, to lessen the number of mouths, by sending twenty-six of the men who had been suffering from scurvy and dropsy, but were now to a certain extent convalescent, with sledges to Port Leopold, and Br. Miertsching and seven others to the Mackenzie River, from whence they could trace their way through the wilds of North America to New York. 3rd March,
1853.

The 15th of April was fixed for their departure, and their sledges and all else were ready, when most unlooked-for and joyful tidings were suddenly announced, which superseded these arrangements.

On the 14th of October, 1852, Lieutenant Meham, of her Majesty's ship “Resolute,” commanded by Captain Henry Kellett, C.B., on his return from searching for Sir John Franklin, visited the Parry Sandstone at Winter Harbour (see page 27 antea), and found on it the record deposited by Captain M'Clure in the previous month of April. The winter, however, was too far advanced to admit of a party being then sent to him, but on the 10th of March, the earliest moment of the spring of 1853, a party was despatched, although with only the slightest hope of reaching the “Investigator” before she should (as supposed) have been deserted by Captain M'Clure. 10th March,
1853.

This party arrived at the Bay of Mercy on the 6th of April, under the command of Lieutenant Pim, whose first approach to the “Investigator” is thus related by Captain M'Clure, by whose side Br. Miertsching was then pacing the ice in front of the ship. “I would,” says he, “were it possible, endeavour to convey the state of feeling which animated not only myself but every soul on board, when this sudden and unexpected appearance on the floe about two hundred yards from the ship was remarked. All description must fall below the reality. Only imagine, if 6th April,
1852.

you can, a whole crew which had to this moment no idea of any ship but their own being within the limit of these dreary regions, cut off from the world, their isolated situation, and (in defiance of all exertion) a little despondent ; when, accidentally, a strange, remarkable and solitary figure is seen rapidly advancing, showing gesticulations of friendship similar to those used by the Esquimaux, black as Erebus from the smoke created by cooking in his tent. My surprise, I may almost add, dismay was great in the extreme. I paused in my advance, doubting who or what it could be, whether a denizen of this or of another world ;—however, the surprise was momentary. “I am Lieutenant Pim, late of ‘Herald ;’ Captain Kellett is at Melville Island.” As the apparition was thus indubitably discovered to be solid real English flesh and blood, to rush and seize him by the hand was but the first impulsive gush of feeling. The heart was too full for the tongue to articulate, as this dark stranger communicated his errand of mercy. The sick, forgetting their maladies, jumped from their hammocks ; the healthy from their despondency—all flew to the only hatchway that was open, and in far less time than it takes me to write this, all hands were on deck. Such a scene can never be forgotten—all was now life, activity, and joyful astonishment. In the twinkling of an eye the whole crew were changed—but, I shall cease to say more ; for I might write much, but never could, even faintly, convey the remotest idea of the sensation created by this most opportune and providential arrival of your relieving party.”*

Thus, says Br. Miertsching, “the Lord interposed for our deliverance !”

7th April, 1853. The next day, Captain M’Clure and a part of his company quitted the “Investigator” with Lieutenant Pim, and reached the “Resolute” at Dealy Island, near the south coast of Melville Island, on the 19th. The distance was accomplished by 19th April, 1853. six hours’ alternate travelling and rest, which proved to be a great improvement on the old method of going a-head by day and heaving-to at night ; so that this wonderful journey of one hundred and sixty-seven miles from ship to ship (crow’s flight) was made in twelve days.

2nd May, 1853. On the 15th, a second party, consisting of three officers, Br. Miertsching, and twenty-four men, followed in three sledges, and arrived at Dealy Island on the 2nd of May. All were greeted by Captain Kellett, his officers, and crew with that truly cordial welcome which is so characteristic of the British seaman—

“In cheering grog the rapid course goes round,
And not a care in all the circle’s found.
Forgetful of the past, with festive song,
Young pleasure led the jocund hours along ;
A thousand thankful thoughts their souls employ,
That fondly dance to scenes of future joy.”

* Letter from Captain M’Clure to Captain Kellett, dated 2nd May, 1853.

The latter party from the “Investigator” were nearly all affected with scurvy; the men, however, rapidly improved under the good diet with which they were now supplied. As to the sanitary state of the ship’s company during the voyage, it is remarkable that up to the day of their discovery by Lieutenant Pim, the number on board was undiminished, which evidently proved the general good health they enjoyed. But latterly the crew had suffered much, and two men died between the 7th and 15th of April; the one of dropsy after a long illness, the other from a few days’ disease of the heart, perhaps caused by excess of joy at his long-yearned-for deliverance. Br. Miertsching attended both in their sickness, and was with them when they departed. May we not hope—

“To the haven of eternal rest,
Now for ever blest,
In the radiance of His love,
Who to save fall’n man from endless woe
Lived and suffered here below,
But now exalted reigns supreme o’er earth and heaven above.”

A third man was suddenly removed to eternity by diarrhoea, caused by unhappily drinking off the contents of some medicine bottles which he had been ordered to wash.

But Br. Miertsching and his companions had yet another severe winter to endure in the arctic ice. In the month of August, the “Resolute,” on board which they were, loosened from the ice, and the Captain hoped to sail for England; but in September his ship and the “Intrepid,” her companion, were both frozen in, and after drifting about until the 13th of November, became stationary in lat. 74° 41’ north, long. 101° 22’ west. Here they remained until April 1854, when Captain Kellett received orders from Sir Edward Belcher, who had wintered in Wellington Channel, to abandon the ships. This was done, and the crews travelled across the ice in sledge parties, a distance of nearly two hundred miles, to Beechey Island, where they were received on board the “North Star,” in which ship Br. Miertsching and the crew of the “Investigator” sailed for England on the 27th of August, and landed at Sheerness on the 8th of October, 1854; having been absent four years eight months and eighteen days.

Aug. 1853.
Sept. 1853.
13th Nov.
1853.
April, 1854.

27th Aug.
1854.
8th Oct.
1854.

“Heav’n, to atone for toils and dangers past,
Restor’d them to maternal shores at last.”

The following verses (a little varied in some lines in order to correct the measure) were penned by J. H. Nelson, an ordinary seaman of the “Investigator,” and given by him to Br. Miertsching, when about to part in April, 1853:—

Farewell to the land where I often have wended
 My way o'er its mountains and valleys of snow ;
 Farewell to the rocks and the hills I've ascended
 The bleak arctic homes of the buck and the doe.*

Farewell to the deep glens where oft has resounded
 The snow-bunting's† song, as she caroll'd her lay
 To hill side and plain, by the green sorrel bounded,
 Till struck by the blast of a cold winter's day.

Farewell, and for ever, to Baring's bleak mountains,
 Where early I've watch'd for the sun's dawning light ;
 His beams sent a thrill through my heart's rapid fountains,
 I thought of the land by his beauty made bright.

Yes !—oft turn my thoughts to the land of my childhood,
 To bushes, and berries, and turf-margin'd stream ;
 To rambles through meadows, and down by the wild-wood ;
 But time has roll'd on—'tis to me as a dream.

Old England, dear England, fair land of sweet roses,
 I long to revisit thy surf-beaten shore,
 The banks where its fragrance the violet discloses,
 To dwell in thy green fields,—and part never more.

At last, my lads, we're now to part,
 Some for our native shore ;
 After revolving years,—perhaps
 We part to meet no more—
 But to whatever climes you roam,
 And wheresoe'er you be,
 Oh ! think of Him that sits aloft,
 Protecting you and me.

Remember you that fearful night,‡
 Ah ! 'twas a time to mark,
 When icy mountains threaten'd near
 To crush our little bark ;
 We all had done what men could do,
 No other hope had we ;
 And who but He that sits aloft,
 Protected you and me ?

* The rein-deer.

† A small bird which appears in the time of snow, of the genus *Emberiza* ; called also the Snow-bird. In the United States of America, the Snow-bird is the *Fringilla nivalis*.—*Webster*.

‡ 25th September, 1850, see p. 21.

Oft have the thick and darkening clouds
 Obscured the unmark'd way,
 And murky haze roll'd gloomy on,
 And hid the face of day ;
 Yet we have braved these dangers dire,
 Many escapes had we,
 For He that always sits aloft,
 Protected you and me

Should perils, when we separate
 Beset our checquer'd way,
 And troubles oftentimes arise,
 Then think on this, and say :
 " I'll put my trust in Him above,
 Who calms the troubled sea ;
 And that bright EYE that's up aloft,
 Will still watch over me."

Br. Miertsching returned home with feelings of humble gratitude to the Lord for protection and blessing experienced at His hands during his long and changeful journeyings, cheered with the faithfulness with which he had been prayerfully remembered by his brethren and sisters. In the first part of the voyage he employed himself in attaining the English language, and therefore had but little conversation until his first winter in the ice ; but from that time he spent many pleasant hours with the officers and crew, and had good reason to believe that the grace of the Lord was in many of their hearts. Divine service was held by Captain M'Clure every Sunday forenoon, and when travelling ashore every morning and evening, in which all devoutly united. He was thankful also for the hearty kindness and consideration he experienced at the hands of the officers and men of the vessels in which he sailed, and especially for the cordiality and attention with which he was treated on all occasions by Captain M'Clure and Captain Kellett—the recollection of which will only cease when memory dies. He left England on the 11th of November to revisit the land of his fathers, and when he shall have complied with the invitation of its ruler, his Majesty the King of Saxony, to appear before and relate to him the incidents of his voyage, he will return to the embraces of his aged mother and step-father, and three sisters, anticipating that he will enjoy their society for a season, preparatory to resuming his labours of love among the Esquimaux on the bleak coast of Labrador ; to whom, by the blessing of the Lord, he will become the more useful, in as far as he shall be able to serve them better from the experience he has attained during his long and eventful voyage.

But what shall be said on the subject that gave rise to the benevolent errand

of mercy upon which the enterprise and skill of so many brave and faithful men have, alas! been fruitlessly engaged?

Oh! that it had pleased the Almighty to prosper his servants in their heavenly mission! They failed in their object: but the friends of the late lamented Sir John Franklin have no cause to sorrow as those without hope. Like one of old "he feared God above many."

" Though bound with ice, in depths of Polar night,
Yet this we know, if comfort still we crave,
Into that dark, *he took with him a light*—
The lamp that can illuminate the grave!"

Let us bow with submission to His righteous will, in the assurance that futurity will disclose what the present hides from our view, and that in the awful catastrophe that has befallen the "missing expedition," He has maintained the principles of His nature, which ever were, ever are, and ever will be, that He is "too Just to injure, too Wise to err, too Good to be unkind."

DANIEL BENHAM.

No. 18, Regent Square, London,
27th November, 1854.

